

Ashwell
Rural District Council.



REPORT

For the Year 1904,

BY

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ASHWELL RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT.

I beg leave to communicate to the Ashwell Rural District Council my Annual Report for the year 1904 on "the conditions affecting the health in the District and the means for improving those conditions," and in addressing myself to this task I have to point out to the Council that by the "Memorandum as to Annual Reports of Medical Officers of Health," issued by the Local Government Board, October 1904, I am directed to discuss prescribed subjects in definite order and give information, which may seem superfluous to the Council. The following extract from the memorandum will make clear the intentions of the Local Government Board :—

"As subjects concerning which the Board desire to obtain, through Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, not only definite general information, but record also of particular changes of condition that may have occurred incidentally or by action of the local authority, the following deserve to be especially borne in mind :—

- "Physical features and general character of the District.
- "House accommodation, especially for the working classes ; its adequacy and fitness for habitation. Sufficiency of open space about houses, and cleanliness of surroundings. Supervision over erection of new houses.
- "Sewerage and drainage ; its sufficiency in all parts of the District. Condition of sewers and house drains. Method or methods of disposal of sewage. Localities where improvements are needed.
- "Excrement disposal : system in vogue ; defects, if any.
- "Removal and disposal of house refuse—whether by public scavenger or occupiers : frequency and method.
- "Water supply of the District or its several parts : its source (from public service or otherwise), nature (river water, well water, upland water, etc.), sufficiency, wholesomeness, and freedom (by special treatment or otherwise) from risks of pollution.
- "Places over which the Council have supervision, *e.g.*, lodging houses, slaughterhouses, bakehouses, dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops, factories and workshops, and offensive trades.
- "Nuisances : proceedings for their abatement—any remaining unabated.
- "Methods of dealing with infectious diseases : notification ; isolation hospital accommodation and its sufficiency ; disinfection.

With regard to such points it should be remembered that these reports are for the information of the Board and of the County Council as well as of the Council of the District, and that a statement of the local circumstances and a history of local sanitary questions, which may seem superfluous for the latter, may often be needed by the former bodies."

According to my usual practice I first pass in review the Vital Statistics and Disease Incidence of the year.

1.—VITAL STATISTICS.

Inasmuch as a decrease in the population is governed by emigration rather than by the relation of birth-rate to death-rate, as is the natural increase, there is no certain factor by which the population can be estimated, and as there is no reason to suppose there is sufficient material alteration to vitiate the substantial accuracy of statistical calculations based upon the results of the enumeration of the population at the Census of 1901, I use those figures as the basis of calculation of Vital Statistics, which are as follows :—

Vital Statistics
Population

The number of deaths which have been registered in the several parishes is 54; this number must be corrected by an addition of deaths which have occurred in Public Institutions outside the district of persons belonging thereto, viz.—four in the Workhouse, Royston, and one in the Three Counties Asylum, near Hitchin, respectively, making a corrected total of 59, (24 males, and 35 females), which on the enumerated population at the Census 1901, gives a death-rate from all causes and at all ages per 1,000 living per annum of 14·9. The mean rate for the previous seven years is 15·9.

Deaths and
Death-rate

There have been no deaths in the group of epidemic diseases.

Epidemic
Mortality.

Influenza has caused no deaths.

The total number of births registered is 84 (51 males and 33 females), equal to a birth-rate of 21·2 per thousand living per annum. The mean rate for the previous seven years is 19·9.

Births and
Birth-rate.

The ratio of deaths under one year of age to one thousand registered births is 59, which is the lowest rate recorded since the constitution of the district, except that for the year 1901, when the rate was 57 per thousand registered births. The mean rate for the previous seven years is 119.

Infantile
Mortality.

District.	Deaths Registered.	Cottage Hospital	Share of Workhouse.	Three Counties Asylum.	Adden-brooke's Hospital.	Total.
Ashwell R.D.C.	54	—	4	1	—	59

The birth-rate although 0·8 below that of the previous year is 1·3 above the average rate of the past seven years.

The death-rate, although 1·8 above that of the year 1903, is not by any means a high death-rate, and is 1·0 below the average of the past seven years.

The deaths among persons of 65 years and upwards amount to 32, or 59 per cent. of the total deaths.

Diarrhœa. There have been no deaths from Diarrhœa during the year.

Phthisis. The number of deaths from Phthisis among persons belonging to the district is 1, and the death-rate is 0·25 per thousand.

Cancer. The number of deaths from Cancer among persons belonging to the district is 7, and the death-rate is 1·77 per thousand.

The deaths and death-rate from Diarrhœa, Phthisis, and Cancer respectively in the district among persons belonging thereto for the previous seven years are set out in the following table :—

	DIARRHŒA				PHTHISIS				CANCER			
	Deaths		Death-rate		Deaths		Death-rate		Deaths		Death-rate	
1897	...	3	...	0·64	8	...	1·71		6	...	1·28	
1898	...	1	...	0·22	4	...	0·88		3	...	0·66	
1899	...	4	...	0·92	6	...	1·39		9	...	2·08	
1900	...	1	...	0·24	2	...	0·48		3	...	0·72	
1901	...	1	...	0·25	4	...	1·01		5	...	1·26	
1902	...	—	...	0·00	1	...	0·25		6	...	1·51	
1903	...	—	...	0·00	5	...	1·26		1	...	0·25	
Average for years	—		—		—		—		—		—	
1897—1903	1·5	...	0·34		4·3	...	1·08		4·7	...	1·18	

2.—DISEASE INCIDENCE.

Disease Incidence.

Disease of an infectious character has been much less prevalent than during the past two years, as is shown by the following table.

NOTIFICATIONS.

	1902.		1903.		1904.
Scarlet Fever	23	...	27 (26)*	...	12 (12)*
Diphtheria	8	...	1	...	—
Typhoid Fever	1	...	1	...	1
Puerperal Fever	1	...	—	...	—
Erysipelas	—	...	2	..	2
	—		—		—
	33		31		15

* Figures in brackets represent the number of cases removed to Infectious Diseases Hospital.

Small Pox.

No case of Small Pox has occurred in the district during the year

With regard to Scarlet Fever all the cases occurred in the village of Therfield. Three cases in one household and one in another household occurred between June 8th and 24th. The origin of infection could not be satisfactorily traced, and there appeared to be no connection between the two families. All the cases were removed to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. No further case occurred until July 28th, when a child aged 16 months at another house was notified and at once removed to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. This patient returned home after being in hospital forty-one days, and within a few days of her return, five other members of the family developed Scarlet Fever and were removed to the hospital. The first of these cases was so evidently a "Return" case that I corresponded with the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital in regard to the circumstances, and he quite concurred with me that it was a "Return" case, and with my suggestion that there should be a special discharge room at the Hospital for patients who had recovered; it was also with his concurrence that the question was discussed by the Joint Hospital Board, and as a result an overflow hut was assigned for the purpose of a discharge room. On October 9th and November 19th respectively another case occurred in the same family, but the exact cause of these cases could not be ascertained.

Scarlet Fever.

One case of Typhoid Fever occurred at Kelshall on May 8th; there was no history of the introduction of the disease by visitors, nor had the patient been away from home; the milk supply was evidently out of the question, but a well, sunk in the clay, from which the water supply for the household was obtained, was fed by rain from the roof of the house, and one unsatisfactory feature about it was that it was observed that it refills independently of rain, and therefore there must be some soakage from the adjacent ground which is probably polluted by organic matter from the surface of the ground.

Typhoid Fever.

Measles prevailed at Barley during July and August and necessitated the closure of the schools for three weeks.

Measles.

Influenza prevailed at Hinxworth during November and necessitated the closure of the schools for one week.

Influenza.

3.—PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT.

The villages of Barkway, Kelshall, Nuthampstead, Reed and Therfield are situated on boulder clay overlying the chalk: Ashwell and Barley on the chalk, and Hinxworth partly on the chalk and partly on the gault. The village of Ashwell is about 150 feet, and the remaining villages between 300 and 500 feet above ordnance datum.

Physical Features &c.

4.—HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

House
Accommodation

The general character of the labourers' dwellings in the district has been adverted to in several previous reports, and during the year the accommodation has been increased by the erection of new houses in the following villages, viz : at Reed, 2 ; Barley, 2 ; Ashwell, 10.

Two cases of overcrowding at Barkway have been satisfactorily abated in each instance by the removal of some members of the family.

There is no official supervision over the erection of new houses, but in every instance a certificate as required by Section 6 of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878, is insisted upon before occupancy.

During the year a letter was received from the Rural Housing and Sanitation Association upon the subject of promoting legislation to provide suitable and healthy cottages in Rural Districts and enclosing a circular for signatures of which the following is a copy :—“ That in dealing with the Housing and Sanitary needs of the district, the exercise of the powers for abating overcrowding and for bringing about the closing of cottages unfit for human habitation was largely hindered by the circumstance of the great scarcity of good cottages ; further, that in considering the adoption of Part III. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, it was felt that in poor agricultural districts it would not be fair to the rate-payers to lay upon them the considerable extra charge which would be incurred by building cottages, and that the time had arrived for Parliament to devise some scheme by which a healthy and self-respecting rural population might be housed and so maintained upon the land.” This expression of opinion was endorsed by the District Council, but there has been no further legislation on the subject, and therefore the only powers possessed by the Council are those of Part III. of the Housing of the Working Classes Acts of 1900 and 1903, adverted to in my previous report.

5.—SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

Sewerage and
Drainage

There is no system of sewerage in the district, but in some of the villages drains are provided to which the house drains are connected, and these discharge into the watercourses.

As the questions of Sewerage and Water Supply for the village of Ashwell are combined in one scheme, and have been the subject all through the year of combined discussion they must be considered together.

Adverting to the remarks in my Annual Report for the year 1903, I have now to record what has transpired with regard to these questions during the year as follows :—

That on the report of their Inspector, the Local Government Board recommended some alteration of the plans and specifications of the Sewerage Scheme involving a further outlay of £480. The Board's recommendations and suggestions were submitted to the Parish Council, and during March they reported in favour of the amended scheme to the District Council, whereupon it was agreed "that the village of Ashwell be constituted a special drainage district for the purpose of charging thereon exclusively the expenses of the works of sewerage and water supply for the boundary of such special drainage district, that application be made to the Local Government Board to borrow the additional sum of £480 for carrying out the works of sewerage and sewage disposal, and that the plans of the proposed sewerage and sewage disposal works, as amended by the engineer to meet the requirements of the Local Government Board be approved."

The plans as amended by the engineer, together with the revised estimate were submitted to the Local Government Board, who on 6th June, 1904, sanctioned the borrowing by the Rural District Council of £3,180 for the purpose of sewerage and sewage disposal works, and on the 2nd June, 1904, £250, part of the £2,338 required for the purpose of water supply, for sinking a well, and approved the constitution of the village of Ashwell a Special Drainage District on the 12th May, 1904, for the purposes above-mentioned. The matter having been referred to the Ashwell Parochial Committee, on July 13th they made the following recommendation to the District Council :—"That the Rural District Council refer the question of Water Supply and Drainage to the Parish Council, with a suggestion that a Parish meeting be called to ascertain the wishes of the ratepayers on the whole question." Accordingly a Parish meeting was held at which a resolution asking that the whole question of Water Supply and Drainage may be reconsidered was passed by 109 votes to 4. This was reported on November 2nd to the District Council, who referred it to the Parochial Committee, and they on December 14th reported that as the cost would be so enormous the Parish ask for time to submit an alternative and less costly scheme.

On January 11th of the current year a petition upon the subject signed by 82 ratepayers and property owners within the special drainage area of the parish of Ashwell, was received by the District Council, and referred by them to the Parochial Committee for consideration.

6.—EXCREMENT DISPOSAL.

Excrement
Disposal.

In most of the villages there are pit-privies, but these are gradually being substituted by earth closets.

At Barkway two earth closets have been substituted for pit-privies, and the pits have been filled up.

At Smith End, Barley, two earth closets have been erected.

At Dane End, Therfield, a pail closet has been substituted for a pit privy, and the pit has been filled up.

The excrement from both privy pits and earth closets is disposed of on garden ground.

7.—REMOVAL OF REFUSE.

Removal of
Refuse.

House refuse is disposed of by the occupiers temporarily in ash pits, and subsequently on garden ground.

It might be worth while for the Council to consider whether systematic scavenging might not be instituted in the larger villages in the district.

8.—WATER SUPPLY.

Water Supply.

At Barkway, Reed and Nuthampstead the Water Supply is obtained partly from shallow wells and partly from ponds; at Ashwell from wells and springs; at Barley, Therfield and Hinxworth from ponds and deep wells; and at Kelshall chiefly from ponds.

The steps taken during the year with regard to the proposed scheme for a water supply for the village of Ashwell have already been adverted to on page 6 under the heading of Sewerage and Drainage.

No steps have been taken to provide an improved supply for the villages of Reed and Kelshall which have been reported on from time to time.

At Nuthampstead in consequence of the supply running short during the summer months, water has been supplied by water cart free of cost to the consumers.

Six certificates under Section 6 of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878, have been granted by the Council.

9.—PLACES OVER WHICH THE COUNCIL HAVE SUPERVISION.

Inspections.

The Slaughterhouses, Dairies and Cowsheds, have been periodically inspected, and where defects have been found, these have on notice from the Inspector, been remedied.

The Regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk-shops Order, adopted by the Council, and approved of by the Local Government Board came into force on April 1st.

The systematic inspection of Factories and Workshops not having yet been instituted, I recommend that a method should be instituted similar to that carried out by other districts in the County for carrying out the provisions imposed on the District Council by the Factory and Workshops Act, 1901.

I believe there are in the district the following workshops :— 5 Bakehouses, 6 Blacksmiths, 7 Bootmakers, 4 Carpenters, 2 Saddlers, 4 Tailors, 4 Wheel-wrights, and a number of Dress-makers and Milliners. All the above and any others that may exist should be placed upon a Register and periodically inspected.

10.—NUISANCES.

Nuisances of various kinds as indicated in the Inspector's Table in the appendix to this report have been dealt with.

Nuisances.

11.—METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The methods of dealing with infectious diseases are by notification, followed by enquiry by the Medical Officer of Health, Inspector of Nuisances, or by both, according to the importance of the cases. The Joint Isolation Hospital for this District and the Royston Urban District, and the Melbourn Rural District, is situate at Garden Walk, Royston, and during the year 12 cases of Scarlet Fever from this district have been treated there. Where cases are not removed advice is given to the house-holders to carry out isolation in their own homes as far as is practicable. The Schools' authorities are informed of the households in which infectious diseases have appeared, with a request to exclude all the members until they are free from infection; but where epidemic influence shows a tendency to spread closure of the schools is recommended, and in this regard the school at Barley was closed on account of Measles, and the school at Hinxworth on account of Influenza.

Isolation
Hospital
&c.

In threatened outbreaks of Diphtheria, prophylactic doses of anti-toxin are recommended for the protection of all persons known to have been exposed to the chance of infection, and bacterial examination of rubbings from the throats and the nasal passages of all known "Contacts" is recommended for the discovery of any unsuspected cases of the disease.

At the conclusion of a case of infectious disease the infected rooms and the articles contained therein are disinfected by aerial disinfectants, and where considered necessary the bedding, &c., is removed for disinfection to the Stove at the Isolation Hospital, Royston.

12.—ADOPTIVE ACTS.

Adoptive
Acts.

The Infectious Disease (Prevention) Act, 1890, and the Public Health Acts (Amendment) Act, 1890, have not yet been adopted.

All the above remarks, together with the tables of Statistics required by the Local Government Board, and the Inspector's record of work, I respectfully submit to the Rural District Council.

BUSHELL ANNINGSOON.

TABLE I.

Ashwell Rural District.

Table showing Vital Statistics for the year 1904 and the antecedent seven years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to the middle of the year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Total Deaths in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of non-residents registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents registered in Public Institutions beyond the District.	Nett Deaths at all ages belonging to the District.	
				UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE.		AT ALL AGES.					Number.	* Rate.
		Number.	* Rate.	Number.	Rate per 1,000 Births registered.	Number.	* Rate.					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
+1897	4680	99	21·1	15	151	64	13·6	...	...	3	67	14·3
1898	4499	79	17·5	13	164	69	15·3	...	...	3	72	16·0
1899	4317	89	20·6	11	123	76	17·6	...	...	15	91	21·0
1900	4135	77	18·6	12	155	55	13·3	...	...	6	61	14·7
1901	3953	87	22·0	5	57	48	12·1	...	...	5	53	13·4
1902	3953	69	17·4	9	130	69	17·4	...	...	7	76	19·2
1903	3953	87	22·0	10	114	43	10·8	...	...	9	52	13·1
Averages for years 1897—1903.	4212	84	19·9	10	119	60	14·2	...	...	7	67	15·9
1904...	3953	84	21·2	5	59	54	13·6	...	...	5	59	14·9

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of population.

† District constituted in this year.

NOTE.—The deaths included in Column 7 of this table are the whole of those registered during the year as having actually occurred within the district or division. The deaths included in Column 12 are the number in Column 7, corrected by the subtraction of the number in Column 10 and the addition of the number in Column 11.

By the term "Non-residents" is meant persons brought into the district, on account of sickness or infirmity, and dying in public institutions there; and by the term "Residents" is meant persons who have been taken out of the district on account of sickness or infirmity and have died in public institutions elsewhere.

The Public Institutions taken into account for the purposes of this and the following Tables are the Union Workhouse and Cottage Hospital, Royston, and Three Counties Asylum, near Hitchin, and Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge.

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered

by water)

Total population at all ages ... 3953.

Number of inhabited houses ... 969.

Average number of persons per house ... 4·0.

} Census 1901.

TABLE II.

Omitted by direction of the Local Government Board as needless for small and undivided districts.

TABLE III.

Ashwell Rural District.

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1904.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.							No. of cases removed to Hos-pital.
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.						
		Under 1.	1 to 5	5 to 15	15 to 25	25 to 65	65 and upw'ds.	
Smallpox ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cholera ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Membranous Croup ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	2	...	...	...	...	2	...	...
Scarlet Fever	12	...	2	8	2	...	...	12
Typhus Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric Fever	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Relapsing Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	..
Continued Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Plague ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
TOTALS	15	...	2	8	2	3	...	12

NOTE.—The Joint Isolation Hospital for this District, the Royston Urban District and the Melbourn Rural District is situate at Garden Walk, Royston.

TABLE IV.
Ashwell Rural District.
Causes of Death at several age periods during the Year 1904.

CAUSES OF DEATH. 1.	DEATHS IN OR BELONGING TO WHOLE DISTRICT AT SUBJOINED AGES.							TOTAL DEATHS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE DISTRICT. 9.
	2 All Ages.	3 Under 1.	4 1 and under 5.	5 5 and under 15.	6 15 and under 25.	7 25 and under 65.	8 65 and upwards.	
Smallpox ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Measles ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Scarlet Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Whooping Cough ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria and Membranous Croup ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Croup ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Fever... {	Typhus ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	
	
Epidemic Influenza ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cholera ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Plague ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diarrhœa. (see notes on next page) ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteritis. (see notes on next page)	2	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal Fever ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Other septic diseases ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Other tubercular diseases... ..	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cancer, malignant disease... ..	7	...	...	...	...	4	3	...
Bronchitis	5	...	1	...	...	...	4	...
Pneumonia	5	...	...	...	...	1	4	...
Pleurisy ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Other diseases of Respiratory organs ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Alcoholism, Cirrhosis of Liver	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Venereal diseases ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Premature birth	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diseases and accidents of Parturition ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Heart diseases	11	1	...	...	...	5	5	...
Accidents	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Suicides ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Not certified	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
All other causes	22	...	1	...	1	4	16	...
All causes	59	5	4	...	1	17	32	...

See Notes on next page.

NOTES.

- (a) In this table all deaths of "Residents" occurring in public institutions, whether within or without the district, are included with the other deaths in the columns for the several age groups (columns 2-8). Deaths of "Non-residents" occurring in public institutions in the district are excluded from columns 2-8.
- (b) See notes on Table I. as to the meaning of "Residents" and "Non-residents," and as to the "Public Institutions" taken into account for the purposes of these Tables.
- (c) Under the heading of "Diarrhoea" are included deaths certified as from diarrhoea, alone or in combination with some other cause of ill-defined nature; and also deaths certified as from
- Epidemic enteritis;
 - Zymotic enteritis;
 - Epidemic diarrhoea. Summer diarrhoea;
 - Dysentery and dysenteric diarrhoea;
 - Choleraic diarrhoea, cholera, cholera nostras (in the absence of Asiatic cholera).

Under the heading of "Enteritis" are included those certified as from Gastro-enteritis, Muco-enteritis and Gastric catarrh, unless from information obtained by enquiry from the certifying practitioner or otherwise, the Medical Officer of Health has reason for including such deaths, especially those of infants, under the specific term "Diarrhoea." Under the headings of "Puerperal Fever," "Phthisis" and "Cancer," are included all registered deaths from causes comprised within these general terms.

Deaths from diarrhoea secondary to some other well-defined disease are included under the latter.

ASHWELL RURAL DISTRICT.

Summary of work done through the Sanitary Inspector in
the Rural Sanitary District of Ashwell during the year
ended December 31st, 1904.

1.	Complaints received	...	...	...	5
2.	Nuisances detected without complaint	...	...	...	26
3.	Nuisances abated	...	...	...	31
4.	Notices served	...	...	...	0
5.	Summonses taken out	...	...	...	0
6.	Convictions	...	...	...	0
7.	Cottages inspected	...	...	...	56
8.	Lodging-houses inspected	...	...	...	0
9.	Slaughter-houses inspected	...	...	...	5
10.	Bake-houses inspected	...	...	...	5
11.	Dairies inspected	...	...	...	0
12.	Cow-sheds inspected	...	...	...	0
13.	Workshops inspected	...	...	...	0
14.	Filthy houses cleansed, Sec. 46, Public Health Act, 1875	...	...	...	0
15.	Houses disinfected	...	...	...	11
16.	Overcrowding abated	...	...	...	2
17.	Houses placed in habitable repair	...	...	...	0
18.	Houses closed	...	...	...	0
19.	Houses erected or rebuilt for which water certificates were applied	...	...	...	16
20.	Certificates granted	...	...	...	6
21.	Certificates deferred	...	...	...	0
22.	Wells sunk or improved supplies of water afforded	...	...	...	0
23.	Wells cleansed or repaired	...	...	...	0
24.	Wells closed	...	...	...	0
25.	Houses connected with sewer	...	...	...	0
26.	Houses connected with water mains	...	...	...	0
27.	Earth pail or improved privies constructed or existing privies altered	...	...	...	5
28.	Privies repaired	...	...	...	6
29.	Cisterns cleansed, repaired or covered	...	...	...	0
30.	Animals improperly kept removed	...	...	...	0
31.	Samples of water taken for analysis	...	...	...	0
32.	Compensation paid for destruction of infected bedding	...	...	...	0
33.	Seizure of unsound meat, &c.	...	...	...	0

GEORGE BAKER,

Inspector of Nuisances.

